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Agenda item 50

Effects of atomic radiation

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

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I. Introduction

1. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 16 September 2011, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its sixty-sixth session the item entitled "Effects of atomic radiation" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item and held a general debate on the item at its 13th meeting, on 21 October 2011, and took action on the item at its 23rd meeting, on 10 November (see A/C.4/66/SR.13 and 23).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (A/66/46);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the effects of atomic radiation in the Marshall Islands (A/66/378);

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on the membership of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation and the financial implications of increased membership (A/66/524);

(d) Letter dated 10 October 2011 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/C.4/66/8).

4. At the 13th meeting, on 21 October, the representative of Germany, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, and the Secretary of that Committee made statements on the work of the Committee (see A/C.4/66/SR.13).

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II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.7

5. At the 23rd meeting, on 10 November, the representative of Germany, on behalf of Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, China, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Effects of atomic radiation" (A/C.4/66/L.7). Subsequently, Austria, Ireland, Latvia, Monaco and Portugal joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

6. At the same meeting, the Secretary of the Committee read out a statement of the programme budget implications of the draft resolution.

7. Also at its 23rd meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.7 without a vote (see para. 8).

III. Recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

8. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Effects of atomic radiation

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 913 (X) of 3 December 1955, by which it established the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, and its subsequent resolutions on the subject, in which, inter alia, it requested the Scientific Committee to continue its work,

Concerned about the potentially harmful effects on present and future generations resulting from the levels of radiation to which mankind and the environment are exposed,

Conscious of the continuing need to examine and compile information about atomic and ionizing radiation and to analyse its effects on mankind and the environment, and conscious also of the increased volume, complexity and diversity of that information,

Acknowledging the concerns about the radiological consequences of an accident which were raised by the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station following the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan,

Recalling the twenty-fifth anniversary of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl,

Recalling also the High-level Meeting on Nuclear Safety and Security convened in New York on 22 September 2011,

Recalling further that the Secretary-General invited the General Assembly to provide the Scientific Committee with the necessary capacity and resources to accomplish its tasks,[1]

Reaffirming the desirability of the Scientific Committee continuing its work, and welcoming the increased commitment of States members of the Scientific Committee,

Emphasizing the vital need for sufficient, assured and predictable funding, as well as efficient management, of the work of the secretariat of the Scientific Committee to arrange the annual sessions and coordinate the development of documents based on scientific reviews of the sources of ionizing radiation and its effects on human health and the environment,

Recalling the tenth preambular paragraph of its resolution 65/96 of 10 December 2010, and noting with appreciation that the new P-4 post for the secretariat of the Scientific Committee has been filled,

[1] See A/C.4/66/8, annex, para. 27 (b).

Recognizing the increasing importance of the scientific work of the Scientific Committee and the need to carry out unforeseen additional work in cases such as the nuclear accident in Japan,

Recognizing also the importance of voluntary contributions to the general trust fund established by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to support the work of the Scientific Committee,

Considering that the high quality of the work of the Scientific Committee needs to be maintained in the future,

Recognizing the importance of disseminating results from the work of the Scientific Committee and widely publicizing scientific knowledge about atomic radiation, and recalling, in that context, principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,[2]

Acknowledging that Belarus, Finland, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Spain and Ukraine had informed the President of the General Assembly before 28 February 2007, in accordance with paragraph 14 of Assembly resolution 61/109 of 14 December 2006, of their desire to become members of the Scientific Committee,

Welcoming the attendance of Belarus, Finland, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Spain and Ukraine as observers at the fifty-sixth, fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth sessions of the Scientific Committee,

1. *Commends* the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation for the valuable contribution it has been making since its inception to wider knowledge and understanding of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation, and for fulfilling its original mandate with scientific authority and independence of judgement;

2. *Reaffirms* the decision to maintain the present functions and independent role of the Scientific Committee;

3. *Takes note with appreciation* of the work of the Scientific Committee and notes the report on its fifty-eighth session;[3]

4. *Requests* the Scientific Committee to continue its work, including its important activities to increase knowledge of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation from all sources, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session;

5. *Endorses* the intentions and plans of the Scientific Committee for conducting its programme of work of scientific review and assessment on behalf of the General Assembly, in particular its decision to conduct a full assessment of the levels of exposure and radiation risks attributable to the accident following the great east-Japan earthquake and tsunami, calls upon the Scientific Committee to submit to the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session the report requested by the Assembly on the attributability of health effects from radiation exposure,[4] encourages the

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[2] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex I.

[3] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 46* (A/66/46).

[4] See resolution 62/100, para. 6.

Scientific Committee at its earliest convenience to submit the other related reports, including on assessments of levels of ionizing radiation from electrical energy production, as well as on the effects on human health and the environment, and requests the Scientific Committee to submit plans for its ongoing and future programme of work to the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session;

6. *Calls upon* the Secretariat to facilitate the timely publication of the reports of the Scientific Committee, inter alia, by continuing to streamline internal procedures as necessary, and to strive to publish the reports within the same calendar year as their approval;

7. *Re-emphasizes* the need for the Scientific Committee to hold regular sessions on an annual basis so that its report can reflect the latest developments and findings in the field of ionizing radiation and thereby provide updated information for dissemination among all States;

8. *Invites* the Scientific Committee to continue its consultations with scientists and experts from interested Member States in the process of preparing its future scientific reports, and requests the Secretariat to facilitate such consultations;

9. *Welcomes*, in this context, the readiness of Member States to provide the Scientific Committee with relevant information on the levels and effects of ionizing radiation, and invites the Scientific Committee to analyse and give due consideration to such information, particularly in the light of its own findings;

10. *Also welcomes* the strategy of the Scientific Committee to improve data collection, encourages in this regard Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations concerned to provide further relevant data about doses, effects and risks from various sources of radiation, which would greatly help in the preparation of future reports of the Scientific Committee to the General Assembly, and further encourages the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Health Organization and other relevant organizations to establish and coordinate with the Secretariat the arrangements for periodic collection and exchange of data on radiation exposures of workers, the general public, and, in particular, medical patients;

11. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme to continue and strengthen, as appropriate, support for the effective conduct of the work of the Scientific Committee and for the dissemination of its findings to the General Assembly, the scientific community and the public;

12. *Urges* the United Nations Environment Programme to continue to strengthen the funding of the Scientific Committee, pursuant to paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 65/96;

13. *Encourages* Member States to make voluntary contributions to the general trust fund established by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme and also to make contributions in kind in order to support the work of the Scientific Committee;

14. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General regarding the effects of atomic radiation in the Marshall Islands;[5]

15. *Also takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the objective criteria and indicators to determine membership that would best support the

[5] A/66/378.

essential work of the Scientific Committee and the financial implications of increased membership;[6]

16. *Decides* to increase the membership of the Scientific Committee from twenty-one to twenty-seven States, on the understanding that the increase in membership can be achieved from within existing resources for the biennium 2012-2013, and requests the Secretariat and Member States to use the budget and the meeting time allocated to the work of the Scientific Committee in the most efficient manner in order to best avoid additional budgetary implications of the increased membership in the future;

17. *Invites* Belarus, Finland, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Spain and Ukraine to become members of the Scientific Committee, and requests the Government of each of those States to designate one scientist, with alternates and consultants, as appropriate, to be its representative in the Committee;

18. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session on the experience of the increase in the membership of the Scientific Committee to twenty-seven States regarding its effectiveness, quality of work and equitable geographical distribution, as well as on options for further increase procedures;

19. *Decides* to next consider reviewing the possible increase in the membership of the Scientific Committee at its seventy-second session, taking into account new expressions of interest in membership received by the Secretary-General between the sixty-sixth and seventy-second sessions of the General Assembly, all previous resolutions of the Assembly and, as appropriate, all relevant reports of the Secretary-General on the Scientific Committee as well as the principle of equitable geographical distribution and the need to ensure the effectiveness and the quality of work of the Scientific Committee, with a view to establishing a procedure at the seventy-third session for the possible further increase in the membership, and requests the Secretary-General to duly inform all Member States about this procedure.

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[6] A/66/524.